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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8166
WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
INFO IRAQ COLLECTIVE
REO BASRAH 1525
REO HILLAH 1499
REO KIRKUK 1496
REO MOSUL 1496

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [I2](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI OFFICIALS INCLINED TO TAKE A WAIT AND SEE
APPROACH TO NEW IRANIAN PRESIDENT

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Ford.
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Our Iraqi interlocutors appear to know little about new Iranian President Ahmadinejad and are taking a "wait-and-see" approach to their dealings with him. Undersecretary Bayati believes the vote for Ahmadinejad was a vote of no confidence against Iran's religious establishment, not a jab at the United States. Bayati thinks the crucial item to watch is Ahmadinejad's cabinet choices for a signal of his true intent. Bayati believes most Iranians like Americans and are eager to improve relations with them, and that Ahmadinejad's statements that he sees no need to work with the Americans may be bluff. Interior Minister Bayan Jabr expressed disappointment that Hashemi Rafsanjani lost the election. The Iraqi leadership, including the Shia Islamists, do not know Ahmadinejad and Jabr thinks that his SCIRI Shia political party should dispatch a delegation quietly to meet the new Iranian President. Looking over the longer term, MFA Undersecretary Abbawi suggests Ahmadinejad's election could set the stage for political change in Iran if in the end he fails to deliver on his campaign promises. Kurdish interlocutors are disappointed that a man they perceive to be a hardliner came to power. Above all, our Shia and Kurdish contacts fear that Ahmadinejad might seek to destabilize the emerging, but shaky, political structure in Iraq. End Summary.

NOT AN ANTI-USA VOTE

¶2. (C) Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for Bilateral Affairs Hamid Al-Bayati (SCIRI) told Poloffs June 29 that he knew little about Iran's new President, the conservative former Tehran major Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. To get a sense of where Ahmadinejad is headed, Bayati said one should pay close attention to the composition of his new cabinet. Bayati did not think that the vote for Ahmadinejad and against Hashemi Rafsanjani was a vote of no confidence against Iran's religious establishment. Besides not wanting a religious man for their President, Bayati said that Iranians voted against Rafsanjani because he represented an entrenched, and seemingly corrupt, establishment. Even though Ahmadinejad has stated that there is no need for relations with the United States, Biayati opined that most Iranians are pro-American and would like to improve relations with Americans.

¶3. (C) Over dinner June 28, Interior Minister Bayan Jabr told PolCouns he was disappointed that Hashemi Rafsanjani had lost the election. Jabr sighed that the Iraqi leadership, including the Shia Islamists, do not know Ahmadinejad. As a result, he said, no one can predict what Ahmadinejad will want from its

relations with Iraq. The new president could complicate Iraq's security problems if he chose, Jabr observed, and the result would be doubly bad for Iraqi Shi'a. Therefore, Jabr concluded, his SCIRI Shia political party should dispatch a delegation quietly to meet the new Iranian President. PolCouns noted that normally a Foreign Ministry opens such quiet contacts, but Jabr brushed this aside. First SCIRI could lead with contacts, and if positive, then the Foreign Ministry could follow up, he opined.

SOCIAL CONFLICT COMING?

¶4. (C) Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for Policy Planning Labeed Abbawi noted in a separate meeting on June 29 that with the Iranian government dominated entirely by conservatives, conditions are set for political change through social conflict. Iranians now enjoy greater social freedoms -- such as looser dress codes and more mixing between the sexes -- and new government efforts to reign in these freedoms would raise the resentment against the Islamic rule, opined Labeed. The loser in the Iranian presidential election, Rafsanjani, is an opportunistic and corrupt "snake", continued Labeed. Though Labeed knew little about the new Iranian president, he predicted that he would be unable to fulfill his campaign promise to fight corruption. The United States, Labeed advised, should not antagonize Alamdinejad, and give him no opportunity to blame the US for his eventual failures.

KURDS DO NOT KNOW HIM

¶5. (C) The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) representative to the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) Dilshad Miran told us June 29 that the Kurds have never met the new Iranian president and do not have an official position yet on him. They are disappointed, however, that such a perceived hardliner came to power -- especially one who is supported by the Iran Revolutionary Governing Council (IRGC). Miran said they are eager to visit the new President and so be able to make better judgments about his positions on Kurds and the KRG.

¶6. (C) Comment: Our Baghdad Iraqi contacts, including those in Da'wa and SCIRI were certain that Rafsanjani - whom they knew well - would win. There has been a pause in Baghdad this week as the Iraqi political class weighs the implications of Ahmadinejad's victory. It is entirely possible that some of Iraq's Kurdish and Shia parties will make the first quiet trips to Teheran to establish contact with the Iranian president. Above all, what both our Shia and Kurdish contacts fear that Ahmadinejad might seek to destabilize the emerging, but shaky, political structure in Iraq.

¶7. (U) REO HILLAH, REO BASRAH, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

Satterfield